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860.446.8858

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Meriden, CT 06450
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CHC of Middletown

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CHC of New Britain

One Washington Square
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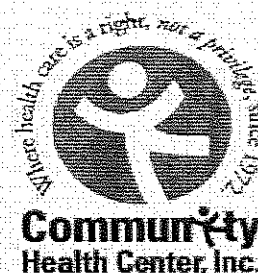
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February 5, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children.

I am Sara Keiling, APRN and I am writing today in my role as Medical Champion of Reach Out and Read for the Community Health Center, Inc., and to lend my support to **Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program.**

Reach out and Read is an exceptional program that hits directly at the literacy gap that exists between high socioeconomic homes and lower socioeconomic homes. As medical professionals we have repeated access to families and often provide trusted advice and guidance on a variety of health topics. Reach out and Read helps provide the tools needed to ensure children receive age appropriate anticipatory guidance and start to build their own individual home library to practice daily.

I currently work at a School Based Health Center in New Britain and have a unique role in providing physical exams for the entire school district (including preschool) to many of the incoming students throughout the year, many of which come from outside the United States. A majority of my patients speak very little English and are starting to build lives in a new country. Books are often not a first priority for parents to purchase and many feel uneasy providing books for their children in a language they are not familiar with themselves.

As a medical provider with the help of Reach out and Read I am able to provide books at well child exams. Often the bilingual book is the parent and child's first book with English words. The most important part of the encounter is encouraging and teaching parents how to read with their children and how to be comfortable encouraging a new language. This is often the first step in empowering parents to support their child's education in a new country with a brand new language.

Every parent I have encountered through this program has been extremely grateful for the book and education that are provided by Reach out and Read.

Please support Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program. The children of Connecticut deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sara Keiling, APRN